

# MCC Committee on Women's Concerns report



Report #46 November-December 1982

## Focus on Two-Career Marriages

**Introduction** "Help we're both employed! How do we relieve the stress without giving up the rewards of a two-career marriage?" That's a question being asked by more and more couples today. Young couples considering marriage are being counseled to consider carefully who they marry for it may make a significant difference in their careers.

The MCC Committee on Women's Concerns recognizes that marriages have ceased to be a "simple matter" of the husband bringing home the bacon and the wife dutifully cooking it. Two-career marriages are on the increase. This issue of *Report* begins the discussion on two-career marriages. There is much more which could be said, but hopefully interest and awareness will be raised so you will continue to study this topic. Perhaps your small group, Sunday school class, or family group will continue the discussion. A resource list has been included to assist you.

Seven areas of concern are presented; there are others which could also have been discussed, and some of the areas overlap. Each area of concern begins with an opening question and discussion followed by responses from two-career couples who responded to a questionnaire sent out during the summer. (They are listed and introduced at the end of the article.)

One weakness of this *Report* is that the topic is addressed from a white, middle-class perspective. The poor, the ethnic minorities are not represented. A situation where both wife and husband work out of necessity—not out of choice—is not discussed. Perhaps a future *Report* will be able to respond from those perspectives.

—Rostie Epp,  
Elkhart, Indiana, compiler of feature  
material for this *Report*.

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### What's in it for us?

There are various reasons—financial, self-fulfillment, security—for both persons in a marriage to pursue careers either full-time or part-time. Some couples

discuss careers before marriage; others make assumptions; and still other couples "happen" onto the two-career pattern after years of following the traditional pattern. Pastors and counselors are encouraged to discuss career options with youth, with couples anticipating marriage, and with those couples already in a marriage in order to help raise the various options, consider both the rewards and stresses, and to help in the decision-making process. The five experiences which follow illustrate several different situations and could be used as starting points for discussion.— RE

Sometimes I am overwhelmed with the lack of information Richard and I had about each other before we married. I don't recall that we ever talked about not having careers. We were both professionally inclined: I was forever seeing myself as a teacher (as I had since age eight) and Richard talked of graduate school. There was something "given" in our commitment to each other that naturally included a career for each of us.

Our marriage has always had some combination of both of us working outside the home: both full-time, both part-time; one part-time, one full-time. This mixing and matching of work schedules/parent responsibilities has always been a point of discussion and, I be an ongoing part of our lives together.

Two reference points may be helpful. One is the role models we both grew up with as part of our family structure. Richard's parents were preacher/missionaries and both worked in that endeavor. My parents were farmers and both contributed in that business. Even though we are in an urban situation, very unlike our past, we have a familiar pattern which we cannot duplicate, but we can affirm.

The second reference point is our commitment to share childcare responsibilities equally. That, by far, has been the most influential factor in determining which careers we prepared for, which jobs we actually accepted, and as we project into the future, what careers lend themselves to personal "fulfillment" plus flexibility to accommodate our chosen parenting model.—Dorothy Nickel Friesen

Charlotte and I have often said to each other that we did not adequately discuss career commitments before our marriage. Thus, some unrealistic expectations occurred on both sides. We both assumed a rather traditional pattern in which the husband's job is the most important. In looking back over our (almost) 25 years of marriage we feel that we did not really face the problem of a two-career marriage. We did not think about the difficulties of coordinating our moves. We could not have anticipated the stress that comes from trying to synchronize two careers. In midlife the husband may be getting tired of his career, while the wife is just jumping into hers (assuming she has been out of her field for a few years while the children were growing up). He may have a job that demands some weekend work while hers may be a Monday-Friday, 9-5, job. When do they go out for some recreation together when their weeks are always "out of synch"?—*Mel Schmidt*

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We got married in 1963 while both pursuing Ph.D.s, and we assumed without much discussion that we would both have teaching careers. We also assumed that it was the wife's job to do the child care, or arrange for it. However, the strain of our children's pre-school years was relieved by two years of MCC service in Botswana; having a housekeeper there, we enjoyed our jobs, our more equal sharing of parental responsibilities and (white) women's liberation.

We now have an ideal situation: tenure in the English and history departments at Bethel College with 1½ jobs between us, and summers off. Each of us has some semesters with extra time for family, research, or personal interests.—*Jim and Anna Junhke*

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Except for a four-year period after the birth of our twin sons, we have both worked throughout our almost twenty years of marriage. We didn't discuss this very thoroughly before our marriage. We got married before the advent of the women's movement, so we both expected that I would do all the "women's work." My husband expected me to work while he was in graduate school, we did not plan to have children, and we really did not think much beyond that. After graduate school there was no question about whether I would work. What else would I do? What hit us suddenly in the first year after graduate school was that we were both doing the same work—teaching college—but I was doing all the housework. That didn't seem fair to me anymore, and I don't think I had even heard of the women's movement at that time. So we had to start changing the roles.—*Elizabeth Yoder*

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During our thirteen years of marriage both of us have been engaged in full-time work as students, teachers or administrators except for one academic year after our daughter was born when Gayle was a half-time student. We didn't explicitly focus on two-career concerns before marriage; we assumed that both of us would be actively involved outside the home in some way. People like Jim and Anna Junhke and Rebecca and Weldon

Pries were important models in our college and early married years. They seemed to be able to creatively combine meaningful work for both partners with marriage and parenting.—*Ted and Gayle Gerber Koontz*

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### Who does the dirty work?

When both persons are working full-time outside the home, the question arises as to who does all those nonelective, unchallenging, unvalued jobs labeled household maintenance? Who gets dinner ready? Who cleans the bathroom? Who mows the lawn? Who does the laundry? How does a couple with two full-time jobs find time to juggle another full-time job at home? Household maintenance can become a source of conflict, but there are numerous options for resolving this problem, especially when traditional role expectations where the woman is expected to take care of the home in an immaculate way are set aside. The first step in the process is recognition of joint ownership of the household chores. Other steps to resolving who does the dirty work include: ordering priorities and deciding what's important and what's extraneous; lowering expectations (i.e., not needing to have the most beautiful lawn in the neighborhood or as clean a house as mother did); hiring help or buying labor-saving devices, such as dishwashers, no-iron clothes, and convenience foods; or simplifying life. (For example, Ray and I found we had less chores and more time for the things we enjoyed when we moved from a three-bedroom house with a yard to a one-bedroom apartment without a yard to take care of.)

How have others answered the question of what happens to the household chores? Do the women try to be the super women (super mom) who tries to handle both career and household chores? Do the couples try to have immaculate houses and lawns, and homemade clothes and breads? Are the men less conscious of the needs of household maintenance?—*RE*

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Have we lowered expectations, divided tasks, hired help? All three. We have a messier house; entertain more simply; have fairly clear lines about who does what; relax by playing with our daughter, Rachel, rather than expecting to have much free time alone; and have given people room and board in exchange for some cooking/cleaning help. We have utilized outside child-care and such conveniences(?) as dishwashers. We have needed to pare projects/activities at home and elsewhere down to basic priorities.—*Ted and Gayle*

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What happens to the housework? We have tried everything—dividing tasks, getting kids mobilized, hiring help. Nothing works perfectly. We find it hard to keep things balanced. Usually one or other of us feels like he/she is getting the short end of the stick. But since having one of us at home full-time doing it all would be worse yet, we try to make the best of it.—*Elizabeth and Perry Yoder*

In some ways I still try to keep house like my mother did even though I'm working outside the home. For example, every spring I get out and plant a big garden. Then I don't have time to take care of it or to preserve what grows and I feel guilty. The public schools exert some pressure on mothers; they invite you to programs in mid-afternoon and expect you to bring cookies. I've noticed that the mothers who work are often the ones who bring homemade goodies (to show that they can do it all?). My husband would like us to entertain more, but I just don't seem to get around to it. But most often the pressures to be supermom are internal.—*Elizabeth*

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We have worked very hard at sharing the housework, realizing that when the "housewife" goes off to a job, she should not be expected to continue what was a full time job at home. Cooking and cleaning and sewing are all things a male can learn to do. Some of our jobs do naturally fall upon one or the other. In our case, the husband is no good with figures, so the wife keeps books, while the wife is not good with mechanics, so the husband takes care of the cars and keeps the lawn mower running. The important point is that tasks are divided up according to abilities and not according to sex roles.—*Charlotte and Mel Schmidt*

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We divided the housework: all the cleaning tasks were listed, and then we negotiated on how to divide them evenly. The primary base for the negotiations: which tasks does one or the other dislike least? One person does the laundry, the other grocery shopping. Each person has designated nights for cooking supper. Although the arrangement may appear legalistic, it can be shifted around through trade-offs.

One ground rule agreed upon at the beginning was that we both promised not to use our tasks as evasion or weapon. For example, guests are not to be invited on the basis of whose turn it is to prepare supper. That has freed us from keeping count on who ends up preparing more special meals for guests.—*Joan Gerig and Orlando Redekop*

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### Whose children are these?

Two-career marriages are often attacked for taking the mother from the home, meaning "from the children." But what about a child's right to a father who also cares for and plays with his child? A child has a right to parents who are committed to each other enough to share child care. This can be done in any situation, but becomes even more important when both parents are employed outside the home.

Adding children to a two-career marriage brings extra demands to the situation. Who finds a sitter? Who plays with the children? Who feeds them? Who stays home when they are sick? How do mothers deal with the societal guilt feelings if they are not at home full-time? How do the parents find time for themselves? Many two-career couples have resolved these difficulties by remaining childless. Other couples, however, have found that children need both mother and father to be available, and that sharing the parenting load not only

eases the situation but allows the child to build healthy relationships with both mother and father. Adjustments such as refusing overtime, cutting back on overnight business trips, settling for less income, sharing trips to music lessons and to the dentist—all these can make for healthy family life. Some families have utilized the services of extended family when possible; others have created their own extended families by adopting grandparents or uncles and aunts from the church or friendship circles. Often, work schedules need to be adjusted to better meet children's needs. For example, one husband whose wife works three days a week goes to work earlier on those three days so that he can leave work in time to be home when the children come home from school.

Only a few of the issues involving children have been mentioned. The next issue of *Report* (January-February 1983) will focus entirely on parenting and deal more fully with the demands that come with having children.

"A husband whose wife is gainfully employed is likely to spend more time and energy with the children and less time on moonlighting jobs. His increased parenting activities create deeper bonds with his own children. . . . He becomes a more caring, sensitive, emotionally available person" (p. 37, Rowatt, *The Two-Career Marriage*).

"A bedraggled housewife may spend less "quality" time with her child than a restored, revived, renewed, replenished mother who finds release and self-expression in her job (p. 44, Rowatt, *The Two-Career Marriage*).—*RE*

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We agreed to choose jobs which permitted us the flexibility of working and caring for our daughter. Joan teaches during the mornings and Orlando works afternoons. When our jobs demand both of us at the same time, one might take Tasara along or she stays with a neighbor. Two part-time salaries do not allow much money for regular outside child-care.

Because of our insistence on integrating our jobs with our demands as parents, the one has not dislocated the other. Our social life may not be as free as those couples without children, but that is not in any way unique to two-job or two-career families.—*Joan and Orlando*

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### Whose career has priority?

When both husband and wife have careers does one have priority? Is there competition? Traditionally it was the wife who stayed home and gave emotional support to the husband when he came home from the factory or office. Who now gives support when both come home exhausted and drained emotionally from a hard day at the office? What happens when a move or transfer is necessary for one? What happens when vacation time falls at different times for each of them?

Wade and Mary Jo Rowatt in their book, *The Two-Career Marriage*, give this advice to couples facing the above questions: there must be a commitment to each other's freedom and desire to work; there must be open

communication and discussion of feelings, hopes, and personal goals; there must be flexibility; and finally, the other must be treated as an adult so that there is no squirming and striving to have "our" job come first.—*RE*

Two careers, unless one of them is an extremely "movable" one, are not easy to coordinate. At this point, two college or seminary teaching jobs are not easy to combine. We are usually fortunate at the moment to be jointly employed by one institution—Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries. We are committed in principle to neither career having priority to the exclusion of the other's vocational contributions. We both also want to be flexible (consider other work than teaching) in the process. Our job and moving decisions have been joint ones. Geographic location was decided twice giving priority to Ted's career possibilities, and once on the basis of Gayle's. Two other times the opportunities were basically equal. In some cases the resolution of these decisions came only after long struggle which included counsel from church members and friends.—*Ted and Gayle*

### **What happens to the money?**

At times there are some financial benefits when both wife and husband are working full-time. Two paychecks often bring economic relief from mounting monthly payments and allow the extra financial assistance needed for buying houses, trips abroad, college for children, or saving for retirement. What happens to the money, especially when both are earning substantial salaries, is a question for struggle in a world where some families hardly earn enough to put food on the table. What happens to our life-style when two paychecks allow for buying beyond our needs? Couples respond in various ways; some families need both salaries in order to "make ends meet," others try to live simply in spite of the financial ability to live otherwise, some find that the "extra" money goes for conveniences which make it possible for both to work. One couple used one of their salaries to "live on" and the other went for special projects at church and in the community aimed at helping others.—*RE*

Two paychecks and the simple lifestyle is a contradiction in terms. It has to do with time as much as money. You don't have time to relax and do simple things with each other. You don't have time to do things "from scratch" or to do things yourself, so you end up spending money. You are too tired to cook, so you go out to eat. You rationalize that since you have a certain job you have to dress a certain way. But mostly life is just more hectic, and that is not what I'd call "simple."—*Elizabeth*

Some of our conflicts come from life-style questions. When both partners work full time, there is little time or energy left over for creating a simple life-style. We tend to eat out more because neither of us has the energy or time to go home and cook. We waste more clothing and paper goods and throw away more things because of the time crunch. So far we have avoided hiring help in the

house, but not without some conflict in settling the question of who does what and when. This year another car became necessary because both parents are out working and cannot take time off to chauffeur the children to their music lessons, etc. We have found that a two-career marriage definitely mitigates against a simple life-style. We would probably do more gardening and other self-help things if we weren't so busy at our jobs.—*Charlotte and Mel*

We try to scale our standard of living so we could live on one full-time salary. With one and a half salaries, we have been able to give 15% to church and peace causes, to hire help with cleaning when the children were little, and now to travel.—*Jim and Anna*

### **So you're considering two-careers?**

What suggestions or advice would two-career couples have for other couples considering two-careers? Here are three responses.

My advice to couples considering two-career marriages is restricted primarily to the male, and emerges from my own experience and reflection. Firstly, I as a male **am** dispensable for economic survival if the woman works, contrary to my inherited conditioning. It may humble my ego if I admit it; it may humiliate my ego if I cannot admit it. The resolution of this issue depends on the maturity of my ego.

Secondly, my productive work need not be defined firstly by its relation to a salary or wage. Productive work often will not be highly valued in the marketplace, and yet it will be socially and morally essential. This refers to the care of children, and equally to activities such as human rights work, combating and exposing the destructiveness of our declining capitalist economy, and experiments in prophetic ministries and actions.

Thirdly there exists an implicit chauvinism in the (male-defined) cultural assumption that I as a man **need** a career. Men and women need to be productive and creative, but the need for my career flows fundamentally from the control traditionally wielded by us males.

My final comment includes male and female. Couples should begin to make clear choices on the relationship of jobs and economic integrity. That is, why does fulfillment for both people demand two \$20,000 plus salaries? What kind of economic and moral integrity supports an annual income of \$40,000 or more, and then prays for the poor of the world?—*Orlando*

We would most definitely encourage other couples to give equal importance to both careers. Sharing the responsibility for making money, taking care of the home and child has forced us to hammer out a common philosophy. There are very few areas in which one of us can shrug shoulders and say, "That's your problem." We're both in it. Of course this can take lots of energy and time—more than we sometimes feel we have. The real payoff for us is being able to share the care of our

daughter knowing that both of us are equally competent in caring for her.—*Joan*

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### **We have seven observations to make.**

First, all men and all women will have a "career" in their adult lives. Therefore, all women and all men include, as part of their perception of a future, how they will be responsible to themselves, their family, their community. It is not a luxury to have a job; it is a necessity. However, that job may not always be outside the home for either the man or the woman. What is needed is a value system which places worth on an individual and not on the size or absence of a paycheck.

Second, the questions before marriage should be: "Does my personal identity need marriage?" "Does my personal identity need a professional career?" Until one is secure with a personal identity (meaning open to change), one is probably not capable of dealing with the stress of conflicting priorities of marriage, career, children, personal fulfillment.

Third, it is impossible to permanently project a specific role (housewife, breadwinner, parent). Those roles will change several times in an average lifetime.

Fourth, the whole discussion of careers is probably a result of affluence. Poor people have jobs; rich people have careers.

Fifth, what works for one couple will not work for another couple.

Sixth, there is no one model for two-career marriages.

Seventh, a career does not automatically give fulfillment. A marriage does not automatically give fulfillment.—*Richard and Dorothy*

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### **What's the church's response?**

As people committed to Christ and the church, we need to ask in what ways can the church aid two-career couples? Is the church silent, supportive, or critical of two-career marriages? I wonder what is being said by the fact that only one of the couples asked responded to this question on the questionnaire?

While the church cannot be expected to resolve all stresses or make major changes in the structure of society by itself, the church can have an impact. It can help bring about needed social change, especially within its own structures. The church can also aid couples in coping with their personal stresses and difficulties. Some possible responses or ways the church might help two-career couples are: be willing to listen to the pain; expand role options for females and males; offer help in exploring alternatives and in decision-making; actively be supportive during periods of change and adjustment (practically, this may mean helping with household chores or child care); coordinate all church activities to cut down on the number of trips to church, and schedule activities which don't conflict with work schedules; offer child care during all adult meetings; form support groups; offer career

counseling as well as crisis counseling; begin a day care program for working parents. The list could go on; each congregation will have to respond in its own way.—*RE*

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Our church supports two-career families mainly by assuming that it is a normal pattern. Tasks like Sunday school and Bible school teaching are broken into smaller, specialized pieces to fit into professional women's and men's schedules.—*Jim and Anna*

### **Contributors**

**Rosie Epp**, former member of MCC's Committee on Women's Concerns, served the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kansas, as associate pastor. Presently she is a senior Master of Divinity student at Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. She is married to Ray Reimer.

**Richard Friesen and Dorothy Nickel Friesen** Richard does community work with the Rosedale team in Kansas City. Dorothy, a former teacher, is a full-time student at the St. Paul School of Theology as well as being a pastoral intern at the Rainbow Boulevard Mennonite Church, Kansas City, Kansas. Richard and Dorothy are the parents of two daughters.

**Joan Gerig and Orlando Redekop** live in Chicago where Joan is a high school teacher and Orlando is a pastor of a Church of the Brethren congregation. They have one daughter.

**James and Anna Juhnke** are both professors at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Anna in English and Jim in history. They are parents to a daughter and a son.

**Ted and Gayle Gerber Koontz** are professors in history and theology, respectively, at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana. Ted and Gayle are the parents of a daughter.

**Charlotte and Mel Schmidt** Charlotte is a nurse/counselor. Mel is pastor of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kansas. They have three daughters.

**Elizabeth and Perry Yoder** Elizabeth is general editor for the Commission on Education of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Perry is professor of Bible at Bethel College. They are the parents of two sons.

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### **Resources**

Bernard, Jessie. **The Future of Marriage**, Bantam, 1972. A gold mine of information collected and analyzed by a competent sociologist about marriage and how that institution affects men and women.

Booth, Alan. "Wife's Employment and Husband's Stress: A Replication and Refutation," **Journal of Marriage and the Family**, 39:4 (Nov. 1977), 645-650.

Byrd, Caroline. **The Two-Paycheck Marriage**, Simon and Schuster Pocket Book Division, 1979. Excellent background to the sociological, psychological, economical, and political ramifications of two-paycheck marriages.



Callahan, Sidney Cornelia. **The Illusion of Eve**, Sheed and Ward, 1965. Presents a view of integrating the many roles of a woman from a Christian point of view.

Callahan, Sidney Cornelia. **The Working Mother**, Warner Paperback, 1972. Using sixteen women and their stories, Callahan portrays the combination of professional careers and parenting.

Clinebell, Charlotte Holt. **Counseling for Liberation**, Fortress Press, 1976. A lively point of departure from the traditional pastoral counseling books. A must for all pastors.

Hall, Francine, and Hall, Douglas. **The Two-Career Couple**, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1979. Offers new research, commonsense advice, interviews, and questionnaires. The Halls focus on the major issues that concern today's two-career couples.

Herman, Jeanne B., and Werbel, James D. **The Effects of Job Transfers on Employees and Their Families**, Washington, D.C.: Employee Relocation Council.

Hoffman, Lois W., and Nye, F. Ivan. **Working Mothers**, Jossey-Bass, 1975.

Homstrom, Lynda Lytle. **The Two-Career Family**, Schenkman Publishing Company, 1973. Looks at real situations in which married couples attempt to work out their own satisfying balance between professional ambition and family relationships.

O'Brien, Patricia. **Staying Together—Marriages That Work**, Pocket Books, 1978.

Rapoport, Rhona, and Rapoport, Robert. **Dual-Career Families**, Penguin Books, 1972. This study by British authors is based on some of the first research done regarding two-career marriages. Some data does not pertain to American marriages, but is overall worthwhile.

Rowatt, Mary Jo, and Rowatt, G. Wade. **The Two-Career Marriage**, Westminster Press, Christian Care Books, 1980. Through personal examples, the Rowatts show how to handle the unique problems and stresses that arise when husband and wife work. Written from a Christian perspective.

Scanzoni, John. **Love and Negotiate: Creative Conflict in Marriage**, Word Books, 1979. Aims to help husbands and wives learn how to arrive at marriage and family decisions together.

Scanzoni, Letha and Hardesty, Nancy. **All We're Meant To Be**, Word Inc., 1974. Written from an evangelical Christian perspective. Essential reading for anyone interested in a biblical approach to women's liberation.

"Working Wives and Mothers, What Happens to Family Life?" **Monthly Labor Review**, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

Yoder, Perry and Yoder, Elizabeth. **New Men, New Roles**, Faith and Life Press, 1977. A study guide for Christian people in social change.

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## News and Verbs

Sue Clemmer Steiner, Waterloo, Ontario, is the new editor of *Report*, beginning with the January-February 1983 issue. She succeeds Muriel Thiessen Stackley who served **three years**. Sue is a previous member of the Committee on Women's Concerns (then the Task Force on Women in Church and Society). She is a 1982 Master of Divinity graduate of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, and currently has two part-time jobs: teaching at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, and serving as youth minister for the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec. She is the author of the new book **Joining the Army that Sheds No Blood** (Herald Press, 1982), an apology for Christian peace-making geared to teenagers. Sue is also the writer of a Foundation Series unit entitled "Basic Christian Beliefs."

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### Resource Listing of Mennonite Women to be Revised

The MCC Committee on Women's Concerns is soliciting information for an updated version of the "Resource Listing of Mennonite Women." First compiled in 1978, the Resource Listing contains names and summaries of resumes of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women who are available to serve on boards and committees, as seminar leaders, retreat speakers, and in a variety of other capacities. A "Directory of Mennonite Women with Graduate Degrees" was compiled in 1979, and a supplement to the Resource Listing was added in 1980.

The Resource Listing presently concentrates on women with experience and education in the areas of religious life, international and cross-cultural experience, teaching writing retreat and seminar leadership, peace and justice issues, counseling, health, fine arts, marriage and family life, and women's issues. For the revision, these areas of expertise will again be included, but women with contributions from other fields are also welcome to submit their names. Women with graduate degrees, ordained women, and ethnic minority women are especially encouraged to submit information.

The Resource Listing will be made available to MCC offices, church conference boards and offices, colleges, seminaries and other church-related institutions. To be included in the listing, send the following information to the Committee on Women's Concerns, MCC, Akron, PA 17501, no later than March 1, 1983: name, address, church affiliation, occupation, education, experience, and areas in which you are willing to serve as a resource.

**Chris Kaufmann**, Goshen College, Goshen, IN 46526, is inviting submissions of data regarding women and black/white photos of women for a 1984 women's calendar. Data should identify specific events, historical accomplishment, first-in-a-field facts, Anabaptist events, and/or those of international significance. Photos should have international and age variance. Send photos and date to Chris by 15 January 1983. The calendar, a class project in "Women and Men; History and Vision," will be printed by July 1983.

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## Knitting the Network; Sending the Message

by Muriel Thiessen Stackley

I am indebted to Wieke van der Velden from Amsterdam for the first half of the title. She and I were saying goodbye at the close of the Women in Ministry conference; she was staying in Ontario for a round of speaking engagements for Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section. "We are knitting the network," she said.

Wieke personifies an added dimension that this conference (in Kitchener, 15-17 October) brought to participating constituencies: a looking beyond ourselves—which was, indeed, the theme of the gathering. Also, for the first time, Brethren in Christ folks joined Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, and General Conference Mennonite women and men—upwards of 200 altogether.

Kathleen Storrie's three addresses (on metaphors of the Body of Christ and metaphors of ministry) and Gayle Gerber Koontz's luncheon address on conflict/confrontation/growth were supplemented by a choice of nineteen workshops.

Kathleen (who teaches sociology at University of Saskatchewan) critiqued the chain-of-command model, demonstrating its inadequacy. "It is the opposite of servanthood as preached by Jesus," she said. More appropriate metaphors are the rainbow (light, promise) or "Sarah's Circle" (inclusiveness, creation, growth, laughter, joy, the touching of hands, surprise, wonder movement, change) or midwifery. "Truly we bring people to birth, new birth, in the Holy Spirit." And, guess what! The Hebrew plural of "womb" is compassion/pity/love.

Gayle spoke so convincingly and methodically about the potential for growth inherent in healthy dealings with (inevitable) conflict that I felt wooed away from my ancient terror of the same. I have a distance to go—as evidenced by my inability to go to a woman who was in attendance at the conference and open an old and undealt-with disagreement. Sometimes even excellent seed takes a while to grow!

The schedule allowed for two workshops per person. I went to one, "Peace and Human Aggression" led by Ruth Klaassen, which was informative, especially as the peace movement affects and is affected by the Can-

adian scene. An aspect not included here but touched on later by Kathleen Storrie is the extent to which males in our society are socialized to be war-makers.

Perhaps I should explain why I didn't go to a second workshop. (I had certainly planned to.) As it happened, two of us sensed a need for solitude, obeyed that impulse, and sat quietly in a car, sometimes praying aloud. The well-put-together conference permitted that freedom.

I sensed an over-all air of peacefulness and nurture during these two days. Significant beyond measure were the sturdy, thoughtful orders of worship: hymns—old and new; prayers of approach, confession, intercession, affirmation, joy; readings from Psalms; and an antiphonal reading for the communion service. These were the hinges of our being together.

And what is the message with which we left? What message is being sent? It is, as it always has been, that women and men alike are gifted for service to God, that women and men alike are called to serve God, and that increasingly women and men are modeling the reality that they can serve God in every aspect of ministry. (A story was told of a woman coming to a "council of commissions" being opposed in principle to women in leadership, but confessing that after seeing some women actually lead, and do it well, she was going to reevaluate her position.)

Among the predictable findings, and some direction for the next committee (for convening in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1983), was a suggestion that teams of women could be invited to—for example—a college campus to model leadership roles, counsel, speak in chapels, etc. The workshop on networking (reported Esther Wiens) named an embryonic "Women Listening" to Women" project; women would be commissioned to go into churches and listen to what women are saying, feeling, hoping for, being frustrated with. Surely the conference motif of an open window with curtain blowing is taking on meaning.

May God go with us. May we know that God goes with us. God, Incarnate, goes with us. (From the closing worship.)

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### Quotes

*A study by sociologist Alan Booth found a slight tendency for husbands of dual-career couples to be happier and under less stress than men who were married to full-time housewives.*

*"According to recent data, husbands whose wives are employed report more often than husbands of housewives that their mate is just as loving, not more critical, feels better, and has less emotional impairment. A liberal interpretation of this data could conclude that the wife's employment has beneficial effects on the husband and thus on the marriage. If she feels more like a total person, the marriage will grow. A conservative view could at least conclude that a working wife does not harm her marriage." (Booth, p. 649)*

**Connections** is the name of a resource center for Mennonite women, formed recently in Elkhart, Indiana. **Sandra Wiens** serves as coordinator; board members include **Jan Lugibihl**, **Mary Schertz**, **Dorothy Yoder Nyce**, **Ann Schertz** and **Brenda Stoltzfus**. The main thrust of **Connections** is to provide a setting and resources for Mennonite women to work on nurturing spirituality as women, through addressing questions of personal faith integration, theology from a feminist perspective and artistic expression. Activities include weekend retreats, workshop series, publishing materials, individual counseling, and a newsletter. **Connections** is cooperating with the Fatima Retreat Center in South Bend. Dates for the next weekend retreats are: February 11-13 and May 13-15, 1983. For more information, contact Sandra Wiens at 509 W. Franklin, Apt. B, Elkhart, IN 46516.

In the precise denominational and geographic rotation in the Committee on Women's Concerns, **Janice Kreider**, Vancouver, British Columbia, has replaced **Edith Krause** as General Conference Mennonite representative from Canada; and **Jan Lugibihl**, Elkhart, Indiana, has replaced **Rosie Epp** as U.S. representative from the same group.

**Dorothy Yoder Nyce** is compiling sermons by Mennonite women who preach, especially sermons on spirituality, justice, and women's stories. Indicate your interest in submitting sermons by writing to Dorothy at 1603 South 15th, Goshen, Indiana 46526, by 15 January 1983.

**Bertha Beachy**, Goshen, Indiana, represented the MCC Peace Section Committee on Women's Concerns on the MCC US Peace Section and the MCC (International) Peace Section meeting in Chicago, November 4-6. **Dorothy Friesen** was on-site coordinator.

**Erna Klassen**, Edmonton, Alberta, will represent the Committee on Women's Concerns at the MCC-Canada Peace and Social Concerns Committee in December.

International Women's Day will be marked 8 March 1983.

**Esther Wiens**, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg R2L 1L1, is collecting artistic expressions from and by women for submission to Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications in celebration of International Women's Day.

At the October meeting of the Committee on Women's Concerns, decision was made to recommend to U.S. Peace Section that representation from the Brethren in Christ (BIC) constituency be a part of the Committee on Women's Concerns. Interested BIC women please contact Linda Schmidt, MCC, Akron, PA 17501.

If you have news and "verbs" that you would like to share with the other 2,000 readers of *Report*, send them to Sue Clemmer Steiner, Apt. 3, 87 Westmount Rd. North, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 5G5 Canada.

## Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* will focus on:

Nurturing Children, January-February 1983, compiled by Karen Neufeld, Tabor College Hillsboro, Kansas 67063;

Women Mystics and Devotional Life, March-April 1983, compiled by Esther Wiens, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg R2L 1L1;

Principles for Hermeneutics, May-June 1983, compiled by Jan Lugibihl, 3003 Benham, Elkhart, Indiana 46514;

Ten-Year Celebration of the Committee on Women's Concerns, July-August 1983;

Women and Non-Traditional Churches, September-October 1983, compiled by Janice Kreider, 4090 W. 31st Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6S 1Y6; and

Women and the Third World, November-December 1983.

The *REPORT* is published bi-monthly by the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns. The committee, formed in 1973, believes that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society. Correspondence should be addressed to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

To subscribe or change your address, please send your old address with your new address to: MCC, 21 South 12th Street, Akron, PA 17501. Allow 2-4 weeks for address change. Contributions welcome.

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